

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General

Scripture: various

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: June 6th, 2004

Spiritual Lessons Surrounding D-Day

Introduction I'm not sure if it is a blessing to you, or a curse, to have a pastor who has a great interest in history—but today the historical air is so thick with observance, memorial and importance that I could not resist the urge to say something about what happened this morning, six decades ago. I do wish that everyone knew all about D-Day and many do not know much. I wish deeply that everyone knew what the Nazis had done and what they wanted to do even further than the Atlantic Wall. D-Day was a day when about 156,000 American, British, Canadian, Polish and a few Free French troops invaded Nazi occupied France, facing some 700,000 German troops in the area called Normandy (France's northern coast.) It had been two years in the planning and the German high command knew it was coming.

A crass feeling that some of us might have to admit—particularly the younger among us—is “what does this have to do with us, here, six decades later? We are Christians and we are concerned with spiritual conditions in the here and now. What do we care about something that happened sixty years ago, across the sea?” That's what I want to talk about today... We live today, in a complex society which is changing all the time. The movement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is far more accelerated today than it was sixty years ago, at least from a 2004 perspective. But in 1944 the Gospel was being shared with people, folks were inviting Christ to be their Savior, His church was functioning and making gains. And the spiritual truths which are so important to us today, were true then too. Let's consider some spiritual lessons, which have D-Day as a backdrop.

First, the problem of evil. Evil has always been around. It hasn't just arrived on the scene in the person of Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden, or in the redefinition of the word “marriage” or in rise of drug usage, or in modern demon fascination or occultism. Adolph Hitler was perhaps, with Joseph Stalin as a close second (maybe they were equals,) the most evil-minded person of the 20th century. In a short ten years, he rose from a nobody to become the most threatening and most powerful figure in the world. In 1944 there was no doubt as to the evil of the Nazi party in Germany and in the other countries which they

had occupied—France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Libya, Algeria and part of Egypt. They were joined in plot for world domination by Minister Tojo of Japan, which had overrun most of the Far East and by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini in Italy. Their vision of the world included no freedom, no liberty of conscience, no exercise of free enterprise and *certainly* no religious proclamation which might undermine their rule. Like the Caesars of ancient Rome, Hitler, Tojo and Mussolini would stomp out any dissenters on religious grounds. The stories of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and O. Hallsby in Europe and countless missionaries who were chased from their mission fields in the Pacific, are testimony enough to this.

But we read in **Romans 5:1-5**

THEREFORE having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The truth here is that **regardless of the tyranny that might arise in the world, Christians live within a great hope!** For Christians, tribulations produce perseverance (or, a tough ability to endure), perseverance produces proven character, which produces hope, because in us the love of God dwells through His Spirit.

The Christian soldiers who went ashore knew what they were about. Some would die when the landing craft ramps went down. But they knew they were dying for a great assault on evil. They knew there could be little better reason to die! I don't know how many Christians there were among the troops who went ashore and faced the enemy on June 6th but there were some I am sure, perhaps many.

Then we read in **Romans 5:6-10**

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

In Paul's day, as colossally on June 6th good soldiers were willing to put their lives on the line for their comrades. Did you know that Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, son of President Teddy Roosevelt, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his conspicuous heroism on D-Day? He wasn't

killed but our country has no higher recognition than that award. Between men and women, there can be noteworthy heroism. But the second truth which surrounds the events of D-Day is the sacrifice which Jesus Christ made, NOT for worthy people, but for ***the ungodly***. It is as if, spiritually speaking, we were the Nazis, training down the machine guns on the ridge above Omaha Beach, on Jesus and He chose to sacrifice Himself for us. Before Christ, we are enemies of God. Don't ever forget that fact. And although D-Day may be the greatest and most noble example of human heroism that we can think of in the past century, it pales in comparison to the timeless wonder of the son of God becoming the Lamb of God NOT for worthy beneficiaries but for His very enemies. What love! What honor! What valor!

Finally we read in **Romans 5:11**

And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

D-Day was the beginning of the end for the worst war the world has ever seen. My entire life has been lived in awe of the monumental task of putting down the evil of the Axis and I have been reading about the event since I can remember. Since I can remember, I have felt tremendous gratitude for the accomplishments of the Allied Expeditionary Force (particularly when, at a young age, my father showed me the photos he had taken inside Buchenwald concentration camp on the very day the SS fled). I have always felt, as was expressed well in Friday's *New York Times* editorial, "envy of a generation that waged war with unflinching moral certainty."¹ Eleven months after D-Day the war in Europe would end. There would be peace. In the two years after that many war criminals would be brought to justice. In time there would be reconciliation with Germany, Japan and Italy.

But Christians live beyond this world and the events of this world. We rejoice in the Lord because of the Great Reconciliation that we are part of as redeemed prisoners and forgiven criminals at the same time. This is the Great Crusade that we have joined when we decided to believe in Jesus, and to follow Him and to see in Him, beyond this world and this time in which we live.

As much as my whole life has been captivated by the aftermath of our victory in the Second World War, I have become even more captivated by the victory which we enjoy—indeed, I *exult* in it—through what Jesus accomplished *for us* in His death and resurrection.

As European cities were liberated one by one by Allied troops, and when World War II was over people filled the streets of American cities and rejoiced. The great four-year tribulation was over!

¹ Editorial by Alessandra Stanley in *The New York Times*, June 4th, 2004

We read in **Revelation 19:7-9**

⁷ “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” ⁸ And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ And he *said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he *said to me, “These are true words of God.”

When “Johnny came marching home,” there was a world-wide sigh of relief and whole nations borders changed, whole populations were given back liberty and freedom. There was the G.I. bill and for a few years at least there was security. But people still get sick and die. Old veterans of World War II are dying these days at a rate something like a thousand a day, nation-wide and I fear for the fact that the Great Crusade is hardly taught in schools any more and students yawn at it more often than not.

But we read in **Revelation 21:3-5**

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, ⁴ and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He *said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

There are many more spiritual lessons from D-Day we could see. But I hope that you will become enveloped in two things today—the wonder of the great thing that happened six decades ago, and that you will appreciate and be humbled by the courage and determination of those men and women. And deeper I hope you will see that it is only a metaphor of the great thing that happened two thousand years ago, in Jerusalem, on the far side of the Roman empire, when God’s son became the Lamb of God, who pours out the love of God into our hearts through His Spirit, when we entrust ourselves to Him. Who, has defeated the enemy, the one who cannot be assaulted with bullets and rockets. The enemy is sin, and we have been given HIS victory by virtue simply of faith in Him and trust in the cross. May this be the great victory song that we sing!